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City-Cowley County
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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County COVID-19 Cases go over 3,150 nearly 60 deaths reported
Vaccine Distribution and planning ongoing.

The City-Cowley County Health Department acknowledges that as of noon Monday January 18, 2021, the County has recorded 3,153 cases of COVID-19. Sadly, additional deaths associated with the virus have climbed to nearly 60 with some recent deaths not currently reflected in the State provided totals.

The Public Health Officer also reports that vaccination work within the county is ongoing. It is anticipated that Cowley County is ready to move from the initial phase (Phase 1(a)) in which essential frontline health and safety workers that were willing to be vaccinated received at least their initial dose of vaccine. It is expected that the transition to Phase 2 is only days away. Phase 2 will broaden the category of people than can receive the vaccine if available. Additionally, the health department is communicating with the hospitals and the community health clinic to ensure that we all maximize our vaccine allocations and serve the community effectively and efficiently.

There appears to be some confusion and rumors about vaccine availability in the county. The health department is engaged in ongoing planning that must be done, we are communicating with organizations in the county, such as school districts and large employers. The reason is to gather information from them so that POD's (Points of Distribution) can be planned for as the rollout of the vaccine continues.

The federal and state health departments that are working with vaccine manufacturers have a vaccine allocation plan in place that determines the amount of vaccine that will be shipped to local providers, like the health department. Several key factors including location, population size, demographics (age and overall health status of population) and the local capacity of the local providers to administer the vaccine, all play a part in determining how much vaccine is shipped to the county on a recurring basis. The health department estimates that to date we have received approximately 1500 doses of vaccine in the county and that approximately 900 people have been given at least one dose successfully. Some initial recipients have received the full 2 doses. As soon as it becomes available it is being scheduled for administration into patients.

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The health department has adopted a “no vaccine wasted” plan. COVID-19 vaccine is provided in vials that contain 10 individual doses. Once a vial is opened the vaccine **MUST** be used in its entirety within a short time period. The scheduling of vaccinations ten (10) at a time becomes paramount to success. Sadly, even with the best planning and scheduling life happens. A person who is scheduled may have to cancel their appointment due to any number of reasons. It is at that time that the health department will refer to a standby list of willing recipients that would meet the requirements for vaccination. Those people can be contacted and offered a vaccine dose in an extremely short time frame (15 – 30 minutes notice) and asked to immediately come to the Health Department for vaccination. By doing this we do not waste even a single dose of vaccine. This process including the use of the “stand by” list is likely to continue until such time as we can have enough vaccine to offer it to everyone in the county that wishes to receive it making the list unnecessary.

The health department is moving forward in the vaccination stage of battling the pandemic and we know that it will become easier as the vaccine supply continues to grow. It is anticipated that nearly 75% of Cowley County residents will want the vaccine. That means we will need approximately 52,000 doses to be delivered and administered within the next several months. We will be addressing the needs of our community keeping in mind that the eldest people in our community are going to be a very high priority for vaccination. We know people are anxious, and so are we, our goal is to help protect them as quickly as we can. The health department will not be the only supplier of vaccine locally but in the early going we are a main source for it locally. Future population vaccination plans include physicians, clinics, and pharmacists as locations where you will be able to be vaccinated. Everyone should understand that the opportunity to be vaccinated will happen – it is basically tied to availability of the vaccine locally, and your willingness to be vaccinated.

Finally, a question has already arisen about the need to wear masks going forward after successfully receiving both vaccine doses. It is very much recommended, so long as we will have active transmission of the virus locally, that we continue to employ all the existing safeguards including masks to prevent viral spread. If we do, we will shorten the time until we can take them off for good, but we must navigate the next few months ahead first. The health department hopes that this can help everyone understand what is happening as we know the vaccine is on many peoples mind right now.

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